

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Most-Favored-Nation Status for China

June 24, 1997

This past weekend, I was proud to host the leaders of the major industrial democracies at the Summit of the Eight in Denver. We discussed ways to make the 21st century safer, more secure, and more prosperous for all our people, and how we need to reach out to the world to ensure our well-being at home.

Today's vote in the House of Representatives to continue our normal trading relations with China enhances our ability to do just that—and to deepen our cooperation with the largest country in the world. I'm especially pleased to see this vote had strong bipartisan support. It sends a clear signal to our friends and foes alike that when it comes to America's security and prosperity, our Nation speaks with one voice.

Today's vote was a vote for America's interests. It makes clear that the right way to encourage further progress in China is not to cut China off but to draw China in.

China is home to nearly one-fourth the world's population and is one of the fastest growing markets in the world. Our steady engagement has expanded areas of cooperation, from stopping nuclear testing to promoting stability on the Korean Peninsula; from combating terrorism, drug trafficking, and pollution to protecting American intellectual property rights. And already, we sell \$12 billion worth of exports to China every year—supporting tens of thousands of good American jobs.

Preserving normal trade relations does not mean endorsement of all of China's policies. When we disagree with China, such as on human rights and religious freedom, we will continue to speak out candidly and clearly. While we've felt all along that revoking normal trade relations would only exacerbate our differences, we are committed to work closely with Congress and others to defend and advance our interests with China as we strengthen our cooperation.

The way China evolves in the years ahead will have an enormous bearing on the shape of the 21st century. A stable, secure, open, and prosperous China that respects international norms and works with us as a partner is profoundly in America's interest. Ultimately, China will decide its own destiny. But by maintaining our steady engagement, we can play a useful role—helping China choose the path of integration that will benefit our people and the world.

Today's House vote reinforces that strategy and strengthens our ability to encourage positive change. Again, I want to thank the House of Representatives for its strong bipartisan support. I look forward to working with Members of both parties to deepen our policy consensus toward China and to advance our security and prosperity in the future.

Statement on Consumer Confidence

June 24, 1997

Today's Conference Board release, along with the University of Michigan's release earlier this month, indicate more good news on the economy.

Today's report shows that Americans are more confident about economic conditions than they have been in 28 years. With consumer confidence, unemployment, and inflation the best they've been in decades, America's economy is

the strongest in the world and the best in a generation.

Unemployment is at its lowest level in 24 years, economic growth is the highest it has been in a decade, and inflation is the lowest for any administration since John F. Kennedy was President. We have already cut the deficit 77 percent since 1992, helping spark this remarkable period of strong growth and low inflation.

Now is the time to build on the bipartisan budget agreement, which will balance the budget for the first time since 1969, honor our val-

ues, and help to continue this solid economic performance.

Excerpt of Remarks During the Family Re-Union VI Conference in Nashville, Tennessee

June 25, 1997

The President. Thank you. Before we begin, let me just say briefly, of all the good ideas that Al and Tipper have ever had, this might be one of the two or three best. This is an amazing thing. It's something a President always hates to admit, but this is something I had absolutely nothing to do with. *[Laughter]* This predates our partnership even. But the fact that they recognized that the welfare and strength of the American family, upon which the whole future of the country depends, is directly affected by all these big issues we often talk about—the workplace issues, the education issues, the cultural issues—and determined to bring it down to family levels, and now this for the sixth time, I think is an astonishing and, as far as I know, unique contribution to America's public life.

And so I just want to say to you, Mr. Vice President, and to Tipper and to everybody who has worked so hard on all these conferences, you've done a great thing for our country, and I'm always glad to be here. I look forward to this every year, and I'm just grateful. And of course, because this day is about parents and education, I'm especially excited about it.

[At this point, the discussion began.]

The President. Unlike the rest of you, I knew what we were about to hear—*[laughter]*—because Hillary went and visited the school and she came back sort of floating. When you were talking about trying to cover that third “b”, I couldn't help but think that's a perfect project for the Vice President's reinventing Government endeavor. *[Laughter]*

I don't think I can add any more to what she said, but I would like to fill in a blank that maybe needs to be filled in for some of you. When Susan was talking, I asked her if her superintendent supported what she was doing, and she said yes. It's just not true every-

where that the school district supports such things or that sometimes the districts are so big they're just so overwhelmed they can't even imagine how to achieve such things.

And that is the purpose of the charter school movement that the Vice President, Secretary Riley, and I have worked so hard to support. It basically says you can create your own school within the public school system. And we have charter schools that are created in many different ways. Sometimes you just take over an existing building, and the teachers run it; sometimes a group of teachers and parents run it. But the point is, you're free to get out from under all those rules and regulations you think you have to cover yourself against.

And no one could have imagined a public school, for example, not only doing the things that were just described but actually buying out crack houses across the street or, if the parents are really poor and they want to be better role models for their kids and support them better, creating, in effect, microenterprises. And Los Angeles now has a \$400 million bank that the Federal Government funded to try to help make loans to people who couldn't get loans any other way, and we'll probably be able to help to finance some of those folks.

But this is just an example of what can be done if educators and parents work together to try to create their own future in circumstances people say are hopeless. People are never in hopeless circumstances unless they have no power to do anything about it. All this charter school movement did was to give people like this remarkable woman the power to change their own lives.

So I think it's a very important component of it, and in our budget, which is part of this balanced budget amendment, we have enough funds to increase by tenfold the number of charter schools over the next 5 years. And I hope